

ART. XLVIII.—*Memorial Oration in Honour of Ephraim McDowell "The Father of Ovariectomy."* By SAMUEL D. GROSS, M.D., LL.D., D.C.L. Oxon. Delivered at Danville, Ky., May 14, 1879. 8vo. pp. 77. Louisville: John P. Morton and Co., 1879.

THE Kentucky State Medical Society has issued, in a beautiful volume, the eloquent oration pronounced by Prof. Gross at the dedication of the monument erected to the memory of "the father of ovariectomy." The selection of the orator was as wise as it was appropriate, for to Dr. Gross is due the credit of having established the claim of McDowell to priority in the performance of the masterwork of the surgery of this century, and the oration is a clear, historical statement of its origin, and of the magnificent results which its practice shows.

Dr. McDowell was born in Rockbridge County, Va., in 1771, and died in 1830. He settled and began the practice of medicine at Danville in 1795, and his pioneer ovariectomy case was performed in that town in December, 1809, upon a Kentucky lady, aged 47, who survived the operation 32 years, during which time, it is said, she enjoyed for the most part excellent health. The meagre report of this case and two others was published without comment in the *Eclectic Repertory* for April, 1817, p. 242, and was noticed in the London *Medico-Chirurgical Review* (Jan. 1825, p. 216) with the sarcastic editorial exclamation "Credat Judeus, non ego". In the succeeding number (p. 408) the editor, Dr. James Johnson, said: "despite of all that has been written respecting this cruel operation, we entirely disbelieve that it has ever been performed with success—nor do we think it ever will." Eighteen months later he wrote (*Ibid.*, Oct. 1826, p. 620) "a back settlement of America—KENTUCKY, has beaten the mother country, nay, Europe itself, with all the boasted surgeons thereof, in the fearful and formidable operation of gastrotomy with extraction of diseased ovaria," and for his former unbelief he made the *amende honorable* to Dr. McDowell by adding "there were circumstances in the narratives of some of the first three cases that raised misgivings in our minds, for which uncharitableness we ask pardon of God, and of Dr. McDowell, of Danville."

We have dwelt upon the impression made at the time by the report of McDowell's cases as showing that he was so far in advance of his generation that the leading medical journal of the country of Keith and Spencer Wells received it with simple incredulity, because it deemed a successful ovariectomy an impossibility. In commenting on this notable episode in the history of ovariectomy, Dr. Gross says: "It is presumable that this frank and manly recantation on the part of a man who occupied so elevated and influential a position as the editorship of the most widely read medical journal in the world had some effect in controlling professional sentiment and inspiring confidence in the declarations of a surgeon whom he had only a few years before denounced as a backwoods operator unworthy of credence." Nevertheless Dr. McDowell had for a long time no imitators, and it was not until about 1843 that, through the bold and persevering example of the Atles in this country, and of Clay in England, the operation began to be generally recognized as justifiable.

It would be interesting here to trace the history of the progress of ovariectomy, but the story has been often told, although nowhere more charmingly than in this address of Dr. Gross. The operation, from being in the beginning derided and denounced, nay even the strong arm of the law invoked to stop it, is now hailed as the great triumph of modern surgery,

and is "performed in every country where civilization has carried the blessings of scientific medicine." Writing in 1872, the late Dr. Peaslee estimated that, in the United States and Great Britain alone, ovariectomy had within the preceding thirty years contributed more than 30,000 years of active life to women; all of which would have been lost had ovariectomy never been performed. Rarely has there been such a benefactor to his race as McDowell, and all honour is due his memory.

The Kentucky State Medical Society has published the dedicatory proceedings in a style worthy of the scholarly oration and of the occasion the remembrance of which it perpetuates.

I. M. H.

ART. XLIX.—*A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Medicine.* By JOHN SYER BRISTOWE, M.D. Lond., Physician to and Joint Lecturer on Medicine at St. Thomas's Hospital. Second American Edition revised by the Author. With Notes and Additions by James H. Hutchinson, M.D. 8vo. pp. 1081. Philadelphia: Henry C. Lea, 1879.

The Theory and Practice of Medicine. By FREDERICK T. ROBERTS, M.D., B.Sc., F.R.C.P., Prof. of Materia Medica and Therapeutics at University Coll., etc. Third American, from the Fourth London Edition. 8vo. pp. 1041. Philadelphia: Lindsay & Blakiston, 1879.

WE have before us new and revised editions of the excellent treatises on Practice of Roberts, and of Bristowe, and after careful examination we find that the good opinion we expressed of them on their first appearance is still applicable to them in their latest forms.

Dr. Bristowe has carefully revised his work and added to it a chapter on Insanity, and the American editor, besides notes distributed through the text, has inserted a new article on Hæmophilia. In our review of the first edition attention was called to the error of Dr. Bristowe's statement that cerebro-spinal meningitis is contagious, and in the present edition we find the paragraph remains uncorrected. Upon turning to ascertain Roberts's opinion upon this point we find that he holds that "there is no reliable evidence that cerebro-spinal fever is at all contagious," which is in accordance with the views of those writers who have studied the disease clinically. In his article on Autumnal Catarrh, we notice that the American editor, Dr. Hutchinson, in common with the late Prof. Morrill Wyman, has fallen into the error of supposing that our southern States are exempt from this curious affection; and as regards prophylaxis we think he does not appreciate the greater or less immunity which is afforded to some sufferers at least by residence at certain points on our north Atlantic coast.¹

Dr. Roberts's work likewise has been carefully revised, the most marked improvements being found in the chapters relating to the Absorbent and the Nervous Systems. The American publishers have reprinted the work in two volumes bound in one, but have preserved the separate pagination, which is awkward and presents no compensating advantage.

Bristowe's work is wider in its scope and contains about one-fourth more matter in a nearly equal number of pages, owing to the difference in the type used; but where so much excellence prevails as in the text of both these books, it would be an ungrateful task to draw a comparative estimate of their merits.

I. M. H.

¹ See American Journal of the Medical Sciences, April, 1877, p. 420.